



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

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TO: Administrators, Directors of Nursing, Human Resource Managers and Staffing Coordinators in Long Term Care, Assisted Living, Residential Health Care Facilities and Hospitals

FROM: Henry T. Kozek, Program Manager, Certification Program
Ray Sweeney, Jr., Supervisor, Criminal Investigation Unit (CIU)

DATE: October 22, 2004

SUBJECT: Changes to the Criminal Background Investigation Process for Nurse Aides/Personal Care Assistants When Renewing Certifications

The Department of Health and Senior Services (Department) has participated in an electronic submission of fingerprint images in order to process the background checks on certified nurse aides and personal care assistants since December 2002. As you may be aware, when a candidate has their fingerprints taken in this manner the image is available for future use, eliminating the need for the candidate to report to have his or her fingerprints taken again. We are pleased to advise you that commencing with certificates due to expire on or after **March 1, 2005**, the Department will use the images archived from previous nurse aide/personal care assistant certification attempts to process the renewal background check required by N.J.S.A. 26:2H-83, et seq.

Approximately 120 days before the certification expiration date, the nurse aide or personal care assistant will be sent a notice from the Criminal Investigation Unit. If we have a valid "PCN" (the number the candidate is given when they have their fingerprints taken) on file, the candidate will receive notice that we will automatically update their criminal history using the archive image unless the person informs us that they will not renew their certificate. If a person tells us they will not renew, we will not process their fingerprints, and their certificate will expire on the expiration date printed on the current certification document. If we do not hear from the candidate, we will update their criminal history record background check automatically. The candidate should receive their renewal authorization letter no later than 45 days prior to their certification expiration date.

If we are not able to identify a valid "PCN", the candidate will receive a letter telling him or her that they need to have their fingerprints taken. The letter will have the needed fingerprint form printed on the reverse side. This means that the candidate does not have to come to the facility for a fingerprint form. However, we will continue to make the blue fingerprint forms available to facilities so that they can provide them to nurse aide and personal care assistants who do not receive a letter or who may have lost their letter. As a reminder, the forms are only used by nurse aides and personal care assistants who are **renewing** their certifications. **Do not** use the forms to conduct "new hire" background checks, as you will not receive results. (Over)

While every attempt will be made to avoid requiring a candidate to report to have new fingerprint images taken, it may be necessary for someone who has previously had their fingerprints electronically recorded to report to a fingerprint office to have new fingerprints recorded. This may be due to:

- A name change, resulting in a different name than what is recorded on the archived print;
- A change in social security number;
- Any change to data that normally does not change (for example, eye color, sex, race)
- Previous images which are not “readable” (includes images which may have been “borderline” on the first submission);
- Images which were used for another license or certification (for example, the person was fingerprinted as a homemaker home-health aide); and
- If the archive image is “damaged” or not readable.

In the event that we are notified the previous image is not usable, we will let the candidate know in writing as soon as possible.

TO RECAP:

1. Approximately 120 days before the certification expiration date, the candidate will receive a letter from the Department. If they have a PCN on file, we will submit the previous fingerprint image unless the candidate tells us they will not renew their certificate. If they do not have a PCN, we will send them a fingerprint appointment form, and they must complete a fingerprint appointment in order to renew their certification.
2. The candidate should receive a response at least 45 days before their certification is due to expire. This may be either a renewal authorization notice or a notice of disqualification. If the person does not receive their renewal authorization notice by that time, they should contact us to resolve the issue.

If you have any questions on this process, please call the Criminal Investigation Unit at (609) 292-4303.